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OKALOOSA COUNTY YOUTH KICK BUTTS TOWARD A TOBACCO FREE FUTURE

***SWAT Members Are Fighting Back During Kick Butts Day to
Expose Big Tobacco***



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Ft. Walton Beach, Fla. – Okaloosa County's Students Working Against Tobacco (SWAT) are speaking up and taking action against the tobacco industry for the 22nd annual Kick Butts Day on March 15. This national day of activism, sponsored by the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, empowers youth to fight back against Big Tobacco.

SWAT's theme this year is "Exposing Big Tobacco: You Can't Make This Up." The student-led organization's goal is to expose the deceptive marketing practices the tobacco industry uses to draw in young people. The initiative also raises awareness about the serious harm caused by addictive tobacco products.

To observe Kick Butts Day, students across Okaloosa County are stepping up to let their peers know the dangers of tobacco. The following activities will occur:

- Ruckel Middle School SWAT members are setting up a table during their lunches with the carnival wheel and educational materials.
- Crestview High School SWAT members are setting up a photo booth and educational table during the school lunches.
- Fort Walton Beach High School SWAT members will be handing out a brochure they created during their WAVE class.
- Northwest Florida State College Tobacco Free Campus Task Force will have a Kick Butts Day informational table at the college's Spring Fling.

"SWAT at Crestview High School is working to derail the deceit and manipulation that tobacco industries have on people by education them on the dangers and making it fun for others to step up and knock Big Tobacco down." said Sean Gabany, Vice President of SWAT at Crestview High School. "We are the future, and we don't want tobacco to be a part of it."

Every day, about 1,300 people in the United States die because of smoking.ⁱ If current smoking rates continue, 270,000 Florida children who are currently younger than 18 years of age will eventually die prematurely as a result of smoking.ⁱⁱ

Youth and young adults rarely consider the long-term health consequences of smoking when they start. Because of nicotine, a highly addictive drug, three out of four youth smokers continue smoking well into adulthood, often with severe and even deadly consequences.ⁱⁱⁱ In fact, about half of long-term smokers die prematurely from smoking-related causes.^{iv}

SWAT aims to empower, educate and equip Florida youth to revolt against Big Tobacco. SWAT is a movement of youth working together to de-glamorize tobacco use. Their efforts aim to shape tobacco-free norms, make tobacco less desirable, less acceptable and less accessible.

About the Florida Department of Health

The department, nationally accredited by the [Public Health Accreditation Board](#), works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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About Tobacco Free Florida

The department's Tobacco Free Florida campaign is a statewide cessation and prevention campaign funded by Florida's tobacco settlement fund. Since the program began in 2007, more than 159,000 Floridians have successfully quit using one of Tobacco Free Florida's free tools and services. There are now approximately 451,000 fewer adult smokers in Florida than there was 10 years ago, and the state has saved \$17.7 billion in health care costs. To learn more about Tobacco Free Florida's Quit Your Way services, visit www.tobaccofreeflorida.com or follow the campaign on Facebook at www.facebook.com/TobaccoFreeFlorida or on Twitter at www.twitter.com/tobaccofreefla.

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ⁱ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The Health Consequences of Smoking —50 Years of Progress: A Report of the Surgeon General. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2014.

ⁱⁱ State estimates of smoking-attributable deaths: CDC, Best Practices for Comprehensive Tobacco Control Programs, 2014.

ⁱⁱⁱ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Preventing Tobacco Use Among Youth and Young Adults: A Report of the Surgeon General. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2012.

^{iv} U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Preventing Tobacco Use Among Youth and Young Adults: A Report of the Surgeon General. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2012.